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**CHICO MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ATTEMPTING TO PRODUCE
CHILD PORNOGRAPHY AND FACES 15 YEAR MANDATORY SENTENCE**

SACRAMENTO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that HAROLD WILLIAM SHIPPEN, 48, of Chico, pleaded guilty today to one count of attempting to produce a visual depiction of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct. The guilty plea was entered before United States District Judge Garland E. Burrell, Jr.

This case is the product of a joint investigation by the San Francisco Division of the United States Postal Inspection Service and the Bay County Sheriff's Office, Panama City, Florida, as part of Project Safe Childhood (PSC). Project Safe Childhood is a United States Department of Justice initiative established to increase federal prosecutions of violent sexual predators of children, and to reduce the incidences of Internet crimes against children including child pornography trafficking. As a part of PSC, the United States Attorney's Office has teamed with state and local agencies to enhance law enforcement's presence on the Internet, and to educate the public and children about safe Internet use, thereby reducing the chance children will fall prey to online sexual predators. For additional information on the PSC initiative, please go to www.projectsafefchildhood.gov or call the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of California and ask to speak with the PSC coordinator.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Camil A. Skipper, who is prosecuting the case, in February 2005, the defendant, using the screen name "femrunaway_wanted," met an undercover Bay City Sheriff's deputy posing as a 14-year-old girl in a Yahoo! chatroom called "Teens Wanting to Run Away." During the next 14 months, SHIPPEN communicated with the undercover officer online and by telephone, eventually proposing ways "she" could run away to live with him. During those communications, SHIPPEN also suggested that "she" take sexually explicit pictures of herself and send them to him. As part of his plea, SHIPPEN admitted that in February 2006 he mailed a package containing a vibrator, KY lubricant, and \$100 to the undercover agent. SHIPPEN intended that the person he then believed to be a minor girl would purchase a digital camera, take sexually explicit pictures of herself, and mail the memory card to him at an address he had provided. As part of his plea, SHIPPEN also agreed to forfeit his desktop and laptop computers to the government.

The defendant is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Burrell on June 29, 2007, at 9:00 a.m. The maximum statutory penalty for a violation of attempted production of a visual depiction of a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct is 30 years imprisonment. A mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years imprisonment applies in this case.

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